

*The* **ENTRUSTED Leader's Workbook**  
***“Barnabas” Edition***

*Seven Core Values that Impact Every Leader-to-Follower Relationship:*  
HEART-MISSION-APPROACH-STABILITY-LIFESTYLE-FORTITUDE-WORLDVIEW

**Lesson Eleven: Denying Self**

By  
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## Lesson Eleven: Denying Self

**CORE VALUE:** An APPROACH to leadership characterized by denial of self and serving others.

**BIBLE VERSE(S):** Mark 8:34-38

**ONE SIMPLE TRUTH:** Denying self requires one to set aside all personal desires and ambitions and follow Jesus' example of pursuing God's will regardless of the personal price involved.

**APPLICATION:** To become the leader God desires you to be requires you to set aside the pursuit of personal gain and make serving others and God's mission of making disciples the top priority wherever you lead.

### Introduction:

By nature, every human suffers from the curse of self-centeredness. We live inclined to protect our own self-interest first and foremost. Self preservation and promotion motivates how we interact with others. Choosing to deny self and forego the pursuit of personal desires remains foreign to our minds.

The fall left the hearts of men bent towards self and away from God. Unregenerate men exist enslaved to a life focused on the gratification of selfish desires. Any thoughts of denying self are confined to short term selfless acts that actually benefit one's self interest in the long run. The lost have no choice but to follow the impulses of their self-centered hearts. Christians do have an alternative choice; one created with spiritual birth and empowered by the Holy Spirit.

Only a personal relationship with Jesus Christ frees a person from the eternal judgment of a self-centered life. Trusting that Jesus paid the penalty your selfish acts

deserve when he died on the cross results in eternal freedom and forgiveness.

Justification by faith does not, however, free us from the temptation, inclination, and results of living a self-centered life while still on earth. The tension between the possibility of denying self and the desire to live for self constitutes a battle that rages within the hearts of every born again Christian. Denying self becomes something a follower of Christ must choose to do daily.

God looks for leaders willing to do all he asks. God said of David: “After removing Saul, he made David their king. He testified concerning him: ‘I have found David son of Jesse a man after my own heart; he will do everything I want him to do.’” (Acts 13:22 NIV) To be a leader willing to do all God asks by definition requires a choice to deny self and pick up the pursuit of whatever God asks of us.

Jesus was willing to do all God asked of him: “My Father, if it is possible, may this cup be taken from me. Yet not as I will, but as you will.” (Matthew 26:39 NIV) In his humanity, Jesus had a will that had the capacity to choose his will over the Father’s will. As hard as it is to imagine Jesus could have chosen in the Garden of Gethsemane not to go to the cross. Fortunately for mankind, Jesus chose to deny self and put the Father’s will first. Jesus lived out his commitment to God’s mission for his life to the point of death, the ultimate act of self-denial.

Jesus approached leadership as a servant. Jesus rejected the world’s authoritative approach to leadership and instructed his followers to do likewise (Mark 10:42-45). This truth was covered in lesson eight of the ENTRUSTED Leader’s Workbook. Jesus took the form of a servant (Philippians 2:1-8). Jesus knew his followers real needs and

humbled himself to meet them. Jesus washed the feet of his apostles and instructed them to do the same for others (John 13:1-7).

Self denial characterizes Jesus' entire life. Jesus' choice to put the needs of others and the will of the Father ahead of his self-interests resulted in sacrifice, suffering, and the humiliation of dragging a cross through the public streets of Jerusalem. To be counted as a follower of Jesus Christ, one must be willing to deny self, pick up a cross, and follow him. The center piece of this lesson is Mark 8:34 where Jesus said: "...If anyone would come after me, he must deny himself and take up his cross and follow me" (NIV). To fully appreciate the force of this statement, one must first understand the context within which Jesus spoke these words.

### **Background/Introduction to the Book of Mark**

John Mark most likely authored this gospel. He had close contact with Barnabas and Paul (Acts 12, 13, 15). John Mark is most likely the same Mark who ministered with Peter in Rome in the early 60s AD (1 Peter 5:13). Peter's life seems to have influenced the writing of the gospel of Mark.

Mark probably wrote his account of Jesus' life in the late 60s AD. The historical backdrop was Nero's persecution of Christians and Peter's death as a martyr in 64 AD. Mark wrote to Roman gentile Christians who were facing the prospects of persecution and death for their faith in Jesus.

The events of Jesus life as recorded by Mark were not arranged in a strict chronological order. The author did not intend to record a detailed historical account. Mark's writing style compares more to a person telling stories about a friend to make a

series of points. Mark's purpose for telling these stories centered on painting an accurate picture of Jesus' identity.

Mark chose this style for his gospel because it served his purpose for writing to his audience of Roman gentile believers. These followers of Jesus Christ were beginning to raise some fundamental questions about their faith. These individuals faced the prospects of persecution and martyrdom for the public display of their faith. The questions being asked were: Who is this Jesus? Is following Jesus worthy of death? These questions remain relevant today.

The first eight chapters of Mark are dominated by two themes. The first picture of Jesus painted by Mark addressed Jesus' true identity and authority. Mark sought to answer the question: Who is Jesus? How a person answers this first question ultimately determines ones answer to the second. Is faith in Jesus worthy of suffering persecution, ridicule, and death?

The second theme addressed by Mark dealt with the hardness of men's hearts. A heart dulled by selfishness would never fully understand who Jesus was. A heart fixed on preserving self-interest would never chose to deny self, pick up a cross, and follow Jesus to the end. Mark shows us how Jesus himself used his teaching of God's Word and a series of miraculous acts to establish his true identity and reveal the hardness of his disciples hearts.

Read Mark 1:17, answer the next two questions, and keep these answers in mind:  
What invitation had Jesus previously extended to Peter and Andrew?

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What promise did Jesus give Peter and Andrew if they accepted his invitation?

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Simon (Peter) and Andrew were fishermen by profession. Jesus invited these brothers to follow him, to watch and observe his life. Jesus told Peter and Andrew that if they accepted his invitation, their lives would be transformed into something new. They would become “fishers of men.” Note, Jesus did not promise that Peter and Andrew would become better fishers of fish if they followed him. Jesus did not promise worldly success and prosperity if they followed him. In the context of today’s world, leaders must keep in mind that following Christ and leading others as Jesus desires, does not bring carry any guarantee of becoming better “fishers of fish,” or better worldly leaders.

The intent of Jesus’ invitation to follow him was to develop his disciples into future leaders for his kingdom on earth. The focus of the disciple’s training would center on their hearts. These potential leaders did not need skills development. These men needed to grasp his true identity and then develop hearts willing to deny self and endure the price of following Jesus publicly.

The gospel of Mark functions as a training manual. This book is like a leadership development manual that records how Jesus trained his disciples. The biggest barriers to developing into the type of leaders Jesus desired them to be was not a lack of skills or knowledge. The challenge that lay before the disciples was to overcome their “Hardened Hearts.”

A hardened heart is one that has become calloused. A person with a hard heart lacks the ability to understand and apply spiritual truth to one’s life. A hard heart clouds

one's thinking, heightens the emotions of the flesh, and misdirects the orientation of one's will onto self.

A quick study of the synoptic gospels, especially the gospel of Mark, reveals that Jesus did NOT spend time developing the functional leadership/management skills of His Apostles. Students of God's Word should keep in mind that among these twelve men were the leaders to whom Jesus entrusted the future of Christianity. Jesus did NOT spend three years communicating the latest principles of management/leadership to His Apostles. Instead, Jesus focused His training efforts on key realities that molded the disciples into the type of leaders Jesus desired.

Read Mark 8:27-38 and then answer the questions that follow each section.

**Questions of the Biblical Text<sup>1</sup> (Mark 8:27-30)**

<sup>27</sup> Jesus and his disciples went on to the villages around Caesarea Philippi. On the way he asked them, "Who do people say I am?"

<sup>28</sup> They replied, "Some say John the Baptist; others say Elijah; and still others, one of the prophets."

<sup>29</sup> "But what about you?" he asked. "Who do you say I am?"

Peter answered, "You are the Christ."

<sup>30</sup> Jesus warned them not to tell anyone about him.

What question about the people in general did Jesus ask his disciples and why do you suppose he would ask this question? (The following passages in Mark provide some background to Jesus' question: 1:11, 24, 2:7-11, 3:11, 21, 22, 30, 4:41, 5:7, 6:3, 14-16, 49.)

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<sup>1</sup> Unless otherwise noted the questions listed in *The ENTRUSTED Leader's Workbook* are based on: *The Holy Bible: New International Version* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1996, c1984)

What question did Jesus ask his disciples and why do you suppose he would ask them this question?

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How did Peter answer Jesus?

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**Commentary:**

In this passage, Mark brings the question of Jesus' identity and authority to a climax. Jesus asked his disciples how other people answered the question of his identity. In the first eight chapters, Mark painted a landscape that included many answers to this question. Mark opens his gospel with a pronouncement from the Father: "...You are my Son, ..." (Mark 1:11 NIV). Mark went on to quote other comments in regard to Jesus' identity and authority that included: The Holy One of God, a blasphemer who claims to forgive sins, the Son of God, a crazy person, a man possessed by Beelzebub, a man with an evil spirit, a in command of the wind and waves, Son of the Most High God, a carpenter – son of Mary, brother of James, Joseph, Judas, Simon, and some sisters, John the Baptist raised from the dead, Elijah, or a prophet of old. Mark recorded the opinions of a broad cross section of first century eye witnesses who ranged from demons and to King Herod.

"Who do you say I am!" This is the question Jesus now posed to his disciples. Jesus made the question of his true identity and authority personal to his followers. The question of Jesus' identity moved from a theoretical debate among the masses to each individual disciple. Jesus knew that how his disciples answered this question in their own

hearts would determine the level of their commitment to follow him and the type of leader each would ultimately become. This remains true today. How you answer this question deep in your soul will determine how you will follow Jesus publicly and how you will lead others.

Peter answered for the group. His statement: “You are the Christ.” was intellectually correct. Unfortunately, Peter and the other disciples failed to process the personal implications of this declaration. They correctly perceived Jesus’ true identity and authority. These original disciples, however, misunderstood who “The Christ” really was and the nature of his messianic mission.

According to Old Testament prophecies, there was only one *Christos*. This was a singular claim. The word in the Greek designates on as the Messiah, the Lamb of God that would take away the sins of the world, the ruler of God’s Kingdom on Earth. Later in the gospel of Mark, the high priest asked Jesus point blank if he was the Christ to which Jesus responded: “I am” (Mark 14:61-62 NIV) Jesus’ answer was nothing short of a claim of divinity, a claim that Jesus would later be mocked for as he hung on the cross (Mark 15:32). There was only one *Christos* in the Father’s plan, and Jesus was the one.

Peter’s pronouncement was ambivalent good news and bad news. The good news was that the disciples had finally come to recognize Jesus’ true identity. The bad news was they did not understand the “Messianic Mission” that inspired every act Jesus performed, including his willingness to deny self and die on the cross. Unfortunately, at this point the disciples failed to comprehend the implications of following Jesus to Jerusalem. They thought Jesus was traveling to claim an earthly throne when, in reality, he was headed to the cross.

The disciples most likely had Old Testament passages such as Isaiah 9, Jeremiah 23:5-8, Ezekiel 37:22-28, Psalm 2, and Isaiah 11 all of which describe “The Christ” as a victorious “Warrior King” destined for a throne. This limited view of the Messiah, motivated James and John to ask for positions of power. What the disciples did not understand was that these pictures of the Christ relate to his second coming. Jesus will, in fact, literally return to earth and reign as king, but this was not the messianic mission during the disciple’s life.

The disciples could not imagine Jesus, “The Christ,” as a “suffering savior.” Old Testament passages such as Isaiah 53 and Psalm 22 did not fit with the disciple’s paradigm of a messiah that would come and rule over Israel and free them from the shackles of Rome. This misconception of “The Christ” would become painfully obvious to the disciples in very short order. Of note, by the time Peter wrote his first epistle, he had come to understand that The Christ would first come and suffer and that glory would follow (1 Peter 1:10-11)

**Questions of the Biblical Text (Mark 8:31-33)**

<sup>31</sup> He then began to teach them that the Son of Man must suffer many things and be rejected by the elders, chief priests and teachers of the law, and that he must be killed and after three days rise again. <sup>32</sup> He spoke plainly about this, and Peter took him aside and began to rebuke him.

<sup>33</sup> But when Jesus turned and looked at his disciples, he rebuked Peter. “Get behind me, Satan!” he said. “You do not have in mind the things of God, but the things of men.”

What did Jesus begin to teach his disciples? Why did he wait until this time to reveal these new truths about himself?

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In a word: How did Jesus speak about this topic?

Why do you think Jesus spoke “plainly” about his sufferings, death, and resurrection instead of teaching these truths in parables?

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How did Peter, the one who had just professed Jesus to be the Christ, react to Jesus’ teaching about his sufferings, death, and resurrection?

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How did Jesus characterize the orientation of Peter’s mind in response to his rebuke?

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**Commentary:**

Now that his disciples had correctly identified him as “The Christ” Jesus immediately began to correct their misunderstanding of “The Christ” and his mission. Jesus began to teach his disciples that his future included suffering, rejection by the leaders of Israel, death, and resurrection. (see OT references to the Messiah’s suffering, death, and resurrection in Isaiah 52:14 and Psalm 16:10)

Mark tells us that Jesus began to speak “plainly” about what lay ahead. Go back and reread Mark 1:1 – 8:30 and one will find that this is the first mention of the Son of Man’s suffering and death. Jesus no longer spoke to them in parables. He wanted his followers to clearly understand the mission he was obediently pursuing and the price he

was going to pay. Jesus wanted the disciples to understand that they were following him to the grave, not an earthly throne. Modern day believers must recognize that they too are following Christ to a grave, not a throne.

This new teaching presented more information than Peter could process. Like James and John, Peter had to have believed all he had personally given up to follow Jesus to this point was going to be rewarded on earth as Jesus ascended to the throne of Israel. This picture of suffering, rejection, and death had no place in his concept of a warrior king. This new teaching so perplexed Peter that he pulled Jesus aside and “rebuked” him. Peter attempted to correct what he perceived as Jesus’ faulty self perception as “The Christ.” The Greek word for rebuke is an authoritative word. Strong defines the term as follows: “ [epitimaō /ep·ee·tee·mah·o/] ... to tax with fault, rate, chide, rebuke, reprove, censure severely. ...to admonish or charge sharply.”<sup>2</sup> Peter pulled no punches at this moment. His, and those of all the disciples, dreams of power, glory, authority, and honor associated with being publicly identified with “The King” was being shattered right before his eyes.

Jesus quickly responded to Peter’s strong words with a rebuke of his own. Jesus spoke to Peter, but looked at all his disciples. Jesus’ message was intended for all of them. Jesus characterized Peter’s mind set as aligned with Satan. Satan tempted Jesus in the desert (Luke 4:1-13). Satan essentially offered Jesus an alternative to God’s will. Satan suggested that by following his will, Jesus could have glory before and without the cross, he could have power without pain and suffering, and he could have fame without

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<sup>2</sup>James Strong, *The Exhaustive Concordance of the Bible : Showing Every Word of the Test of the Common English Version of the Canonical Books, and Every Occurrence of Each Word in Regular Order.*, electronic ed. (Ontario: Woodside Bible Fellowship., 1996), G2008.

being rejected. All of this appealed to the concept of “The Christ” being a warrior king, not a suffering savior. The last thing Satan wanted was Jesus on the cross.

Peter was suggesting the same course of action; an earthly throne without suffering. Jesus knew, as Peter would later acknowledge, the real glory of a throne lay on the other side of suffering on a cross. Jesus went on to admonish Peter and the disciples that their minds were set on the things of men, not the things of God. The disciples were fixed on pursuing the self centered agendas to gain positions of power, influence, affluence, authority, control, and fame. Jesus wanted them to understand that following him meant a reorientation of their minds and hearts. The things of God had to become their number one priority, no matter the personal costs. The next passage of scripture would make this point crystal clear to the disciples and to the masses who were gathered around him.

### **Questions of the Biblical Text (Mark 8:34-38)**

<sup>34</sup>Then he called the crowd to him along with his disciples and said: “If anyone would come after me, he must deny himself and take up his cross and follow me. <sup>35</sup>For whoever wants to save his life will lose it, but whoever loses his life for me and for the gospel will save it. <sup>36</sup>What good is it for a man to gain the whole world, yet forfeit his soul? <sup>37</sup>Or what can a man give in exchange for his soul? <sup>38</sup>If anyone is ashamed of me and my words in this adulterous and sinful generation, the Son of Man will be ashamed of him when he comes in his Father’s glory with the holy angels.” (Mark 8:27-38 NIV)

What two groups did Jesus call together as a follow up to his rebuke of Peter?

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In verse 34 Jesus starts his teaching with a conditional phrase. What choice is in question that precedes the second half of verse 34?

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The second half of verse 34 lists three things someone must do if he or she wants to come after Jesus. What are these three things?

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3.

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What did Jesus say a person must do to gain life?

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What do you think Jesus meant by this?

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What happens when a person attempts to hang onto one's life?

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Why do you think Jesus suggested that a life fixed on gaining the world for self might cost a person his or her soul?

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What did Jesus say would happen to someone who is ashamed of him and his words?

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**Commentary:**

In this passage Jesus clarifies that the choice to turn away from the things of men and embrace the things of God has a price. Clearly, to set aside our selfish missions in life and pursue God's mission for our life will cost us things that are dear to us. As did Jesus, one must resist the subtle alternatives offered by Satan that seem to be short cuts or alternatives to God's will.

Jesus called his disciples and the crowd to hear what he was about to say. The significance to the inclusion of the masses is that the invitation to follow Jesus is open to anyone who was willing to pay the price. The door of discipleship, to be a learner of

Jesus, is open to all; all who dare to follow Jesus' defined path. The message of the cross relates to everyone who will listen, not just a select few of committed believers.

Remember that Jesus is still speaking plainly and not in parables. Jesus introduces his definition of the requirement of following him with a conditional phrase. Jesus says: "If anyone would come after me ...". Clearly the use of the term "if" indicates a choice that precedes the qualification to follow. The New International Version then uses the phrase: "anyone would come after me". The Greek term for "would" is *thelo*. This is the verb form of the noun *thelema*. *Thelema* is the same term used in Acts 13:22 when God spoke of David as being a man after his heart because David was willing to do all his will (*thelema*). Perhaps, a clearer translation of this conditional phrase might be "If someone chooses to orient the will of their heart on coming after me ...".

There is another key term in this conditional phrase Christ followers must understand. Back in Mark 1:17, Jesus extended Peter and Andrew an invitation to "follow Me" to "*deute opiso mou*", to "come after me". To *deute opiso* was an invitation to observe, listen, and learn. This invitation simply meant an individual could follow along with Jesus in order to find out who he was and what he was about. The time for casual observation was now over. The time for following Jesus with no price associated had ended.

The invitation to follow Jesus in Mark 8 possesses a different nature than the one found in Mark 1. Jesus was now raising the commitment level of being associated with him. In this conditional phrase Jesus said: "If anyone would *come after* me ...." Jesus uses different terms with this invitation than his previous one. Jesus no longer extends the invitation to "*deute opiso*" or casually follow along observing me. Now, the invitation

includes the words “*erchomai* and *opiso*”. This combination of Greek terms that we translate *come after* is more the sense of being publicly identified with Jesus Christ. What Jesus says is; if you set the will of your heart to be publicly identified as my follower then this is what it looks like. What we will see next is that following Jesus is not a path to earthly thrones, fame, fortune, and positions of authority. Following Jesus, publicly standing as his follower, has a price associated with it and Jesus is about to speak plainly about the price.

Jesus lists three actions a person must take if one wants to be publicly identified with him. The first act requires a person to deny self. The Greek word used by Jesus is *aparneomai*. Strong defines the term as follows: “...to deny. ...to affirm that one has no acquaintance or connection with someone. ...to forget one’s self, lose sight of one’s self and one’s own interests.”<sup>3</sup> In Mark 8:34 this term reveals an imperative, which means a command. To follow Jesus requires one to completely disassociate his or her life with one’s own self interests, needs, and agenda. One must ask him or herself: Am I willing to pay this price to be counted as a follower of Jesus?

Setting something aside to follow Jesus requires picking something else up in return. Picking something up defines the second condition mentioned by Jesus. We let go of self and we “take up” something else. True discipleship involves letting go or putting down self will and then picking up God’s will in its place.

The Roman authorities of Jesus’ day required a condemned criminal to publicly carry a cross to the spot of one’s execution. This spectacle provided an act of public

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<sup>3</sup>James Strong, *The Exhaustive Concordance of the Bible : Showing Every Word of the Test of the Common English Version of the Canonical Books, and Every Occurrence of Each Word in Regular Order.*, electronic ed. (Ontario: Woodside Bible Fellowship., 1996), G533.

humiliation. With this in mind, Jesus lays out the third condition of following him which is picking up a cross. God's will for Jesus included a literal cross on which he was to die. This act was necessary to fulfill God's purpose in his life of offering his life as a ransom for many. God's mission for Jesus included a literal cross. God's mission for Jesus' followers involves telling others about Jesus' death on the cross.

### **Application**

So what does self denial mean to those of us who are modern day followers of Jesus Christ and leaders of others in the marketplace? Let me begin by stating what I think it does not mean. Denying self in the context of following Jesus should not be thought of as a short term casual act of personal sacrifice or inconvenience. Denying self is not as simple as choosing temporary abstinence or doing without something we love.

What Jesus is demanding of those who follow him, those who choose to be publicly identified as his follower, is a total 180 degrees turning away from the pursuit of all personal agendas, never to return to them. One must make a total and public commitment to engage everything we are and possess for the cause of Christ and to let the chips fall where they may. This commitment extends to everywhere we live and lead.

This is not to say you should quit your job, sell your possessions, give all your money away, and live in seclusion, isolated from the world. In some respects, this would be too easy. We have already suggested the possibility that you already reside exactly where God wants you to lead others. Most likely you already lead in the mission field in which God desires you to lead. What God may be waiting for is for you to stop pursuing your own interests and make the interests of others and his mission of making disciples

the focus of where and why you lead others. This would be a choice to “deny self” and “pick up a cross” and follow Jesus.

Jesus desires leaders to use every opportunity to lead others to pursue his mission for his followers, which is to make disciples. This mission must take priority over all other marketplace endeavors. The possibility exists that this choice may cost you something dear. This decision to publicly follow Jesus where I lead may result in persecution. All I can say is that I believe Jesus spoke plainly about the price of following him.

One may also ask: Who is Jesus and how could he ask this of me? Let’s go back to the purpose of the gospel Mark. If Jesus is asking a follower to deny self and suffer persecution, then the question becomes the same today as it was in first century when Christians regularly faced becoming a martyr: Who is Jesus and is he worth dieing for? If we truly believe Jesus is “The Christ” then the answer is a resounding: YES!

Denying self requires an unwavering trust in the sovereignty and love of God. The sovereignty of God gives us the peace of mind that God is ultimately in control of all the circumstances of my life. We rejoice in the good and bad alike because we view them all as part of God’s will. Likewise, if we truly believe God loves us, then take comfort that all circumstances ultimately work for our good, even though some situations appear bad.

### **Conclusion**

Jesus clarified in Mark 8 that His true identity included an empty tomb, not an earthly throne. Jesus clearly explained to the Apostles that the invitation to follow Him involved going to the depths of a grave, not the lofty heights of world leadership that they so selfishly craved. Jesus brought His lessons of leadership together in Mark 8:34 NIV

when He set forth the non- negotiable terms of becoming a leader in His Kingdom “Then he called the crowd to him along with his disciples and said: ‘If anyone would come after me, he must deny himself and take up his cross and follow me.’” Jesus looks for leaders who are willing to completely disassociate the attitudes and actions of ones heart from self and follow Him down the path of persecution and public humiliation on a cross. The need for and process of heart reorientation from self to God’s will defines how Jesus developed leaders. Any leadership development that deviates from this focus appears incomplete at best, or produces leaders that ignore their heart need and rely on management techniques and leadership skills.

Jesus’ message to His followers in Mark 8 did not win Him popularity points. Jesus painted a clear and truthful picture of God’s will in regard to the Christ being rejected and the Savior’s death on a cross. Jesus communicated to all concerned that following Him required relinquishing one’s personal goals and pursuing God’s objectives. Jesus did not play to the masses and speak what the populace wanted to hear. The masses want a leadership development process that promises an end result of success, popularity, and material gain.

One of the problems in leadership development today stems from a desire to sell to the masses. The not-so-subtle message communicated in many programs suggests that if a leader leads like Jesus, then he or she will receive God’s blessing and become a more effective leader from a worldly point of view. These same programs conveniently omit Jesus’ teaching which communicates the message that to lead like Him, one must wash feet, rub elbows with the downtrodden, accept rejection by rulers, endure ridicule, expect persecuted, and carry a cross. Potential leaders do not flock to development programs

promising an end result of persecution and personal sacrifice. Herein lays the problem. Most Christian leadership development programs omit unpopular realities of Jesus' message to leaders because these truths tend to drive prospects away.

Denying self requires one to set aside all personal desires and ambitions and follow Jesus' example of pursuing God's will regardless of the personal price involved. To become the leader God desires you to be requires you to set aside the pursuit of personal gain and make serving others and God's mission of making disciples the top priority wherever you lead.